

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An assembly for exchanging retractor support arms within a retractor support clamp, the assembly comprising:

    a main body having a surface defining a cavity extending into the main body from a first end;

    a pivot ball attached to a second end of the main body wherein the pivot ball engages the retractor support clamp;

    a support arm having an end portion having a substantially complimentary configuration to the surface defining the cavity wherein the end portion is positionable within the cavity; and

    a retaining mechanism disposed about the main body and in communication with the end portion for retaining the end portion within the main body.

2. (Original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the main body further comprises at least one through bore intersecting the cavity.

3. (Original) The assembly of claim 2 wherein the retaining mechanism comprises:

    at least one spheroidal member positioned within the through bore wherein the spheroidal member has a first portion extending into the cavity and a second portion extending beyond an outer surface of the main member; and

    a housing having a through bore wherein the housing is disposed about the main body and moveable thereon wherein an engaging surface which defines a portion of the through bore engages the second portion of the spheroidal member and forces the first portion of the spheroidal member into the end portion when the housing retains the end portion within the main body.

4. (Original) The assembly of claim 3 wherein the engaging surface has a frusto-conical

configuration.

5. (Original) The assembly of claim 3 wherein the end portion further comprises an annular groove and wherein the first portion of the spheroidal member is disposed within the annular groove and retains the end portion within the main body when the housing is in the first position.

6. (Original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the cavity has a substantially non-round first surface.

7. (Original) The assembly of claim 6 wherein the end portion of the retractor support arm has a substantially non-round second surface wherein the second surface engages the first surface to prevent rotation of the end portion of the support arm within the cavity.

8. (Original) The assembly of claim 1 and further comprising a compression spring disposed about the main member and in communication with the retaining mechanism wherein the compression spring biases the retaining mechanism into retaining the end portion.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently Amended) A docking apparatus for exchanging retractor support arms within a retractor support apparatus, the docking apparatus comprising:

    a main body attached to the retractor support apparatus, the main body comprising an internal cavity;

    a support arm having an end comprising a substantially complementary configuration to the internal cavity within the main body wherein the end is positionable within the internal cavity; and

    a securing mechanism engaging the end of the support arm and the main body wherein the securing mechanism applies a force to the end of the support arm and the main

body to retain the end of the support arm within the main body and wherein the end has an axis offset from an axis of the support arm such that when the end is positioned within the cavity the offset axis of the end prevents rotational movement of the end within the cavity.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the securing mechanism comprises a coiled flexible spring positioned within the internal cavity and wherein when the end is positioned within the internal cavity the coil flexible spring retains the end within the cavity of the main.

12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the end comprises a non-round portion that engages a non-round port of the internal cavity to prevent rotation of the end within the cavity.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Original) A method of securing a retractor support arm within a docking apparatus attached to a retractor support apparatus, the method comprising:

disposing a spheroidal member within a through bore that intersects a cavity of a main member where a first portion of the spheroidal member is positioned within the cavity;

positioning an end of a retractor support arm within the cavity;

positioning an actuating mechanism disposed about an exterior surface of the main member into a non-engaging position;

forcing the end of the retractor support arm into the cavity wherein the end displaces the first portion of the spheroidal member from the cavity; and

positioning the actuating mechanism into an engaging position wherein an internal surface of the actuating mechanism engages a second portion of the spheroidal member extending beyond the exterior surface of the main member such that the first portion is forced into the internal cavity and engages the end of the retractor

support arm and retains the retractor support arm within the main member.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14 and further comprising engaging an annular groove of the end of the retractor support arm with the first portion of the spheroidal member to retain the end within the main member.

16. (Original) The method of claim 14 and further comprising biasing the actuating mechanism into the engaging position with a compression spring.

17. (Original) The method of claim 14 and further comprising engaging a first substantially flat surface of the end with a second substantially flat surface the cavity wherein the first and second flat surfaces contact to rotatably fix the end within the cavity.

18-32 (Cancelled)

33. (New) An assembly for exchanging retractor support arms within a retractor support clamp, the assembly comprising:

a main body having a surface defining a cavity extending into the main body from a first end;

a support arm having an end portion having a substantially complimentary configuration to the surface defining the cavity wherein the end portion is positionable within the cavity; and

a retaining mechanism disposed about the main body and in communication with the end portion for retaining the end portion within the main body wherein the retaining mechanism comprises:

at least one spheroidal member positioned within the through bore wherein the spheroidal member has a first portion extending into the cavity and a second portion extending beyond an outer surface of the main member; and

a housing having a through bore wherein the housing is disposed about the main body and

moveable thereon wherein an engaging surface which defines a portion of the through bore engages the second portion of the spheroidal member and forces the first portion of the spheroidal member into the end portion when the housing retains the end portion within the main body.

34. (New) The assembly of claim 33 wherein the engaging surface has a frusto-conical configuration.

35. (New) The assembly of claim 33 wherein the end portion further comprises an annular groove and wherein the first portion of the spheroidal member is disposed within the annular groove and retains the end portion within the main body when the housing is in the first position.

36. (New) An assembly for exchanging retractor support arms within a retractor support clamp, the assembly comprising:

a main body having a surface defining a cavity extending into the main body from a first end;

a support arm having an end portion having a substantially complimentary configuration to the surface defining the cavity wherein the end portion is positionable within the cavity;

a retaining mechanism disposed about the main body and in communication with the end portion for retaining the end portion within the main body; and

a compression spring disposed about the main member and in communication with the retaining mechanism wherein the compression spring biases the retaining mechanism into retaining the end portion.

37. (New) The assembly of claim 36 wherein the cavity has a substantially non-round first surface.

38. (New) The assembly of claim 37 wherein the end portion of the retractor support arm has a substantially non-round second surface wherein the second surface engages the first surface to prevent rotation of the end portion of the support arm within the cavity.

39. (New) A docking apparatus for exchanging retractor support arms within a retractor support apparatus, the docking apparatus comprising:

    a main body attached to the retractor support apparatus, the main body comprising an internal cavity;

    a support arm having an end comprising a substantially complementary configuration to the internal cavity within the main body wherein the end is positionable within the internal cavity; and

    a securing mechanism engaging the end of the support arm and the main body wherein the securing mechanism applies a force to the end of the support arm and the main body to retain the end of the support arm within the main body and wherein the securing mechanism comprises a coiled flexible spring positioned within the internal cavity and wherein the end is positioned within the internal cavity the coil flexible spring retains the end within the cavity of the main body.

40. (New) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the end comprises a non-round portion that engages a non-round port of the internal cavity to prevent rotation of the end within the cavity.